To the men who toil in their denim blue
Where the base ports meet the sea.
Whose glad hand first reached out to you.
Whose strong hand first met me—

BASE PORT AND FRONT BOTH SPELL WIN

Here's a health as they work each day
With a song on their merry lips—
They're playing the harder game who stay
To watch for the coming ships.

BASE PORT BUSTLE EVER ON INCREASE AS ARMY POURS IN

Dock Records Smashed by Stevedores as Doughboys Storm Fismes

FREIGHT FILLS EVEN DECKS

Incoming Ships Unloaded in Hurry Whether Trains Are Awaiting Cargoes or Not

At an ever increasing pace are the wheels of the American war machine in France revolving. With the same force with which American line units, in the last few weeks, have made their debut in big scale warfare, have the other branches of the service upon whose efforts depend the potency and effectiveness of the man in the trenches accomplished their less spectacular but equally important work. On the front and behind the lines recent accomplishment has been equally striking and significant.

More work was accomplished in the S.O.S., by an appreciable percentage during July than in any previous month. More dirt was excavated on the rail lines of communication, more steel was laid, more warehouses were constructed and more conspicuous still at the base ports, more men were landed, more freight was discharged from incoming ships and the efficiency of its handling was materially increased.

On the same day that the American Infantry, treking in the wake of the retreating Germans, gained the outskirts of Fismes, colored stevedores unloading a ship at one of the base ports unostentatiously won an important victory by discharging 1,200 tons of flour in 9½ hours, setting a record for the A.E.F. and a pace which is rarely excelled on the best equipped docks in the United States. The same group of stevedores, over a period of five days, discharged an average of 2,000 tons of cargo per day from one ship, a record more notable still.

Proving Their Value

The tremendous growth of the A.E.F. this summer has increased proportionately the volume of supplies and munitions which must be handled at the base ports, and the docks and railroads carefully planned a year ago by American engineers to handle that vast influx of freight are now proving their immense value.

It is a 24 hours a day grind at the base ports now, where thousands of American colored troops are putting ashore the million and one articles, big and little, which are necessary for the maintenance of a modern army. The scarcity of ocean tonnage makes necessary the utilization of every ounce of ship capacity and the saving of every possible moment in dispatching supplies to France.

The Germans reasoned reassuringly, a few months ago, that American participation in the war would be small because of the lack of ships. They figured it would take six tons of shipping to support every American soldier in France.

It won't take that much. Late authoritative estimates are that each man will require between three and four tons. Several factors have entered into this reduction, not the least of which is efficient handling of the transports.

Miles of Docks Beating Germans

The miles of American docks which have been built in France in the last year, equipped with modern freight handling machinery, make possible a much quicker dispatch of the ships than the Germans thought possible, and this is accentuated by the energy with which the work is being done.

Moreover, the American transports are scientifically loaded now, so much heavy freight, so much light freight to utilize to the limit both the dead weight and space carrying capacity of all ships, with large bulk freight on the upper decks.

A common load for a medium sized freighter now is 1,000 tons of steel, 3,000 tons of lighter freight and a deckload of crated automobiles or airplanes.

This system of loading and handling means making six ships do the ordinary work of seven, or five ships do the ordinary work of six, which in effect is equivalent to adding many new vessels to the American merchant marine.

Speedy Return for More

Once a ship arrives the discharge of freight begins and the work is uninterrupted until the job is completed. If freight cars are available the cargo is dispatched to the warehouses in them.

But if the freight comes faster than the trains can handle it, it is piled on the docks or in temporary storage warehouses nearby, to be sent ahead when the congestion is relieved. Above all, the ship is discharged and started back for another load.

Most of the American colored stevedores never saw a ship until they started for France, but they are proving their worth as cargo handlers. Working in the hold of a ship with an August sun raising heat waves from the deck isn't the easiest job in the Army, but they are breaking records at it and it hasn't dampened their sunny dispositions either.

YANK CARS IN PLENTY

American-made railroad cars are appearing in abundance on the railroad lines which form the chief American arteries of communication in the S.O.S. There are flats, box cars and tank cars, all of them bearing conspicuously the initials "U.S.A."

The tank cars created something of a sensation among the French population when they first made their appearance. Having found out that Americans are not habitual wine drinkers, and looking upon whiskey as the national American drink, the French concluded that the tanks were for whiskey. It was necessary to explain that they were designed for the transportation of oil and gasoline.

The American car, although modeled after the European railroad wagon, has a carrying capacity almost three times as great.

At the base ports much of the incoming freight is loaded direct on trains and dispatched immediately to storage and distribution bases. From one system of American docks an average of 400 carloads a day are shipped.

STEVEDORES: Seven Days a Week at Ten Hours a Day

HERE AND THERE IN THE S. O. S.

Geographically, the A.E.F. may be described as a body of land entirely surrounded by a "No Smoking" fringe. In the interior it is something of a smoker's paradise. But it is emphatically *defense de fumer* at both fronts, battle and water. You frequently can't smoke in the first line because Fritz is watching, and you can't smoke at the other end because you would set the docks on fire.

Colored troops from Louisiana have a linguistic advantage over other American soldiers. Many of them, through living in sections where French still is spoken, are more or less familiar with the language of this land when they get here. But they have their difficulties nevertheless.

"It's dis way," explained one. "Ah talk French pahfectly, but not de kind dey talk in dis country. You see, Ah learned French from nah fathah de pure, classical, ole New Orleans French and dey don't speak dat kind ovah heah."

Henry Clay Smith feels the same way about that ocean voyage as a lot of the rest of us.

"When dis wah is ovah," he says, "you'll nevah see me goin' back across dat ocean. Ahm not goin' back to de United States dat way. Ahm going to return by de way of New Orleans.

There is no place in the world where Americans and mosquitoes can live together. In amplification of this, it may be said that when the Americans come the mosquitoes go.

The French civilian population in many localities noticed a striking absence of mosquitoes this summer. They couldn't understand it until they found out it was the work of the Americans.

The A.E.F. sanitary corps has been busy at points where Americans are stationed and all stagnant water nearby has been treated with the same oil composition which virtually exterminated the mosquito and overcame fever on the Isthmus of Panama.

"Chiggers" it is, then.

The plagues of the ol' swimmin' hole are true internationalistic, it seems. Not only do they thrive in the cricks of the paw-paw and corn country back home, but a Latin branch of the family is in active operation in at least one corner of the S.O.S.

The way they were discovered is this: Tommy had come down from the line with coots and itch among the least of his troubles. His troubles once cleared up, coots and itch included, they shot him to a classification camp. There, with a clear skin for the first time in months and a good appetite for the first time in weeks, he disported himself right merrily, going swimming every day.

And then the coots came back, or the itch, or both. At least, that was what Tommy thought, until one day, in a frenzy of scratching, he was about to swear off bathing for the rest of the war and was quite vocal about it.

"Sunbeam," in the next bunk, overheard him. "Sunbeam" is called that because "Thunderclond" would be so much more appropriate. "Sunbeam" said:

"Mebbe 'taint no itch. Mebbe it's jes' dem ornery li'l chiggers, lahk yo'all used to have in de States f'm fresh water swimmin'."

"I'll be a"—you know what—"if that ain't it!" exclaimed Tommy. And investigation proved "Sunbeam" was right.

Indications point to a warm and fairly comfortable winter. The 17 French put-the-coal-in-at-the-top-and-watch-it-fall-out-the-bottom stoves around which the A.E.F. tried to keep warm last winter are to be materially reinforced. Stoves, apparently, are arriving in quantities. At one place the Q.M. has half a warehouseful stored against the snowy day.

The next thing you know, you may have to wash your mess kit three times instead of the usual twice and the third time in boiling water. Reason: There may be germs around, and boiling water kills them.

A certain unit has tried both the twice-over and the thrice-over way. In the former process, the medical officer in charge noted that while the soapy water in the first pail was, after use, nearly sterile, the clear water in the second pail showed 5,000 to 6,000 "colonies" per cubic centimeter. And colonies (except, of course, the Philippines) are mighty bad things from a medical standpoint.

Accordingly, the unit's mess authorities added the third pail to the kit-washing chain. It is placed over a fire and kept boiling all the time the men are using it. And so far it has worked so well that the unit, which is a large and hefty one, hasn't had a single infectious complaint spread through its ranks.

The example, according to the Chief Surgeon, is "well worth following."

There is a little town in the S.O.S. district that put its house in order for the influx of Americans. Overnight the "Café du Lion Rouge" became the "Red Lion Tavern," with a real elbow-high bar and real draught beer—nothing stronger—fit for the delectation of the gods, the boiler-shop boys and the members of the grave registration unit. "Au Souvenir Français" became "American Souvenir Shop"; while an enterprising coiffeur offered the amazing novelty of "Shave with Hot Towel and Haircut."

One conservative old estaminet: however, refused to change its name. Neither outwardly or inwardly did it bow to the new order of things; and yet neither outwardly nor inwardly (though more's the wonder) has it suffered aught as regards prosperity. Like Massachusetts in Webster's speech, "There she stands," flouting its centuries-old sign before all the Americans, yet in they flock.

The sign reads: "Café de la Marine."

They used to shoot craps in Stevedore Co. No. —, but they don't any more. This as a consequence of a stern company order issued after a prolonged argument with the dice which followed the first payday on this side.

There was a game at every opportunity for about a week, and then came a lull. Simultaneously with the lull the men began to turn up shy in articles of apparel and equipment. Investigation disclosed that one dusky private with a pair of dice that behaved particularly well had made a sensational clean-up.

He had gathered most of the francs in the company in the first three days and then started on personal effects. At the conclusion of the series he had nearly enough francs to finance a war of his own and more clothes than the supply sergeant, not to speak of 36 identification tags, seven boxes of C.C. pills, a bottle of castor oil, 11 towels, most of the soap in the company and a packing case full of other articles. At the suggestion of the captain he returned all of the belongings and most of the francs.

"Ah learned dat game in the old Tenth Cavalry," he exclaimed, "and Ah just wanted to show dose new soldiers dat dey didn't know nuffin' about it."

The American troops on the line haven't any more enthusiastic supporters anywhere than the colored stevedores at the base ports. The cargo handlers are faithful and regular readers of the newspapers and make up in interest any shortcomings in comprehension.

"Dat last drive was a grand battle," commented one. "Ah knew things sutinly would begin to happen when dem American boys got on de line."

"J. F. SMOLKER'S Violin is in possesion of C.O., A.P.O. 712."

TRUCKS GO FORWARD SOON AS ASSEMBLED

Autos Barely Recover from Seasickness Before They Are Speeded to Front

Automobiles of all types are arriving in quantities for the use of the A.E.F., and almost as soon as they are landed from incoming steamers they are assembled, tested, tuned up and started inland to begin service. Among the features of the activity at the base ports are the big assembling stations for the reception of gas vehicles.

Automobiles and trucks usually arrive 95 per cent completed. Putting them in commission entails only mounting the wheels, attaching the top, installing the seat, or some such job, and putting the engine in running order. One assembling station—Motor Reception Park "A" of Base Section No. 2—has been, for several weeks, turning out a daily average of nearly fifty trucks, 30 pleasure type cars and a smaller number of motorcycles. The work is being done by the Motor Transportation Corps.

Steel bodied trucks for the ammunition trains and four wheeled trailers which look like a European railroad car and are not much smaller, for the supply trucks, are two of the types of freight vehicles arriving.

All automobiles go to their destination under their own power to save space in the railroad cars, the trucks always in addition proceeding from the coast loaded with quartermaster or ordnance supplies. These are dispatched in groups of two or three score each and move across country with the regularity of a railroad train. They have a certain route to take, and a certain distance to cover each day.

HOME BOUND MAIL BUNDLED AT BASES

Big Terminal Sorts A. E. F.'s 2,600,000 Letters Every Week

Homeward bound mail from the A.E.F. is to be speeded on its journey by a new method of handling which has been put into effect by the postal service. Hereafter, outgoing mail, in addition to profiting by greater expedition on this side of the ocean, will be sorted and bundled before leaving France so that upon its arrival in the United States it will catch the first train toward its ultimate destination and reach that destination by the quickest route.

The perfecting of this system follows the completion at the principal mail port of a big mail terminal similar to those in New York, Chicago and a few other big cities in the United States. This is a building 30 feet wide and nearly 200 feet long. To it goes nearly all of the A.E.F. outgoing mail. There it is sorted according to its destination.

It is roughly estimated that every man in the A.E.F. writes an average of a little over two letters or post cards a week, which means that every seven days something over 2,600,000 pieces of mail, not counting packages and papers, arrive at this station.

Eighty experienced postal clerks sort the mail as it is received. They come from every part of the United States, and each, through intimate experience with the section from which he hails, knows just how a letter bound there ought to be routed. Each handles mail for the section with which he is familiar.

As the mail comes in each man sorts the mail for his section. The letters are placed in racks divided into cubby holes. There are 7,500 of these cubby holes, each for a city or town in the United States which are subcenters of distribution for thousands of nearby smaller villages. Just before a mail boat sails the accumulated letters in each rack are tied into packages and these are put in bags marked so that they will be sent direct from New York to the starting point of the mail route along which their contents will be distributed.